Verb Class Restrictions on NP Referentiality in Falam Chin Verbs
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RRG Framework: Key Concepts (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005)

• Semantic valence
  o Number of arguments in LS

• Syntactic valence (S-transitivity)
  o Number of arguments in core

• M-transitivity
  o Number of macroroles
  o Syntactically most significant
    ▪ Activity verbs of creation/consumption have non-referential second argument which cannot take macrorole/undergo certain syntactic operations
    ▪ Active accomplishment verbs take 2 referential arguments/2 macroroles

• State predicates
  o Two-place predicates
    ▪ be' (x, [bald'])
    ▪ feel' (x, [happy'])

• Activity predicates
  o Zero-place predicates
    ▪ do' ([rain'])
  o Single-place predicates
    ▪ do' (x, [walk' (x)])
  o Two-place predicates
    ▪ do' (x, [write' (x, y)])
    ▪ do' (x, [write' (x, y)]) & INGR written' (y)

• Inherent argument
  o Optional do' (x, [write' (x, y)])
  o Incorporated
  o Oblique
  o Obligatory

• Activity vs. active accomplishment alternation found in many ergative languages
  o Active accomplishment = ergative
  o Activity = non-ergative

Ergative vs. Non-Ergative Structures
• FC a “double-marking language” (Nichols 1986)
  o Cross-reference (head-marking, ACC)
  o Case marking (dependent-marking, ERG)

(1) Cinte Ø cu a it.
   Cinte ABS TOP 3SG.NOM sleep
   ‘Cinte slept/is sleeping.’

(2) Thangte in hrampi Ø a Ø at.
   Thangte ERG grass ABS 3SG.NOM 3.ACC cut
   ‘Thangte cut the grass.’

(3) Thangte in a lo at.
   Thangte ERG 3SG.NOM 2.ACC cut
   ‘Thangte cut you.’

(4) Hrampi Ø cu Thangte in a Ø at.
   grass ABS TOP Thangte ERG 3SG.NOM 3.ACC cut
   ‘Thangte cut the grass.’

• Head-marking is dominant syntactically (Jelinek 1984)
  o Cross-reference is fixed & obligatory; NPs are free & optional
  o NPs do not necessarily “match” coreferential cross-reference
  o Cross-reference forms are syntactic arguments
  o NPs are appositives to the arguments (VV 2008; Nichols 1986)

Figure 1: Syntactic structure of head-marking language
\textit{Active accomplishment = ergative}\\

(5)  Cinte \textit{in} bezai \emptyset a \emptyset phuah.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ERG} poem \textbf{ABS} 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write  \\
‘Cinte wrote/is writing a poem.’  \\
LS for act. acc. \textit{phuah} \textit{do’} (x, \textit{[write’} (x, y))] & INGR \textit{written’} (y)  \\
SR for (5) \textit{do’} (3sg[Cinte], \textit{[write’} (3sg[Cinte], 3sg[bezai])) & INGR \textit{written’} (3sg[bezai])  \\
\textit{Activity = non-ergative}\\

(6)  Cinte \emptyset \textit{cu} bezai a phuah.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ABS} \textbf{TOP} poem 3SG.NOM write  \\
‘Cinte wrote/is writing poems/poetry.’  \\
LS for act. \textit{phuah} \textit{do’} (x, \textit{[write’} (x, ca))]  \\
SR for (6) \textit{do’} (3sg[Cinte], \textit{[write’} (3sg[Cinte], 3sg[bezai]))  \\
\textit{Discourse Context}\\

(7)  Zo \textit{in} hi bezai \textit{cu a \emptyset phuah}.  \\
Who \textbf{ERG} this poem \textbf{TOP} 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write  \\
‘Who wrote this poem?’  \\
(8)  Cinte \textit{in a \emptyset phuah}.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ERG} 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write  \\
‘Cinte wrote it.’  \\
(9)  *Cinte \emptyset \textit{cu a phuah}.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ABS} \textbf{TOP} 3SG.NOM write  \\
‘Cinte wrote it.’  \\
\textit{Topicality/Definiteness}\\
Non-ergative cannot be marked by \textit{cu} ‘TOP’\\

(10)  Cinte \textit{in bezai \textit{cu a \emptyset phuah}.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ERG} poem \textbf{TOP} 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write  \\
‘Cinte wrote the poem.’  \\
(11)  *Cinte \emptyset \textit{cu bezai \textit{cu a phuah}.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ABS} \textbf{TOP} poem \textbf{TOP} 3SG.NOM write  \\
‘Cinte wrote the poem.’  \\
\textit{Topicalization}\\
Non-ergative cannot be fronted\\

(12)  Bezai \textit{cu Cinte in a \emptyset phuah}.  \\
poem \textbf{TOP} Cinte \textbf{ERG} 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write  \\
‘The poem, Cinte wrote it.’  \\
\textit{For Further Study}\\
• Some unexpected NPs are compatible with the non-ergative variant.  \\
  o Demonstrative NPs  \\
  o Proper names  \\
  o Possessed items  \\
(14)  Cinte \emptyset \textit{cu hi bezai a phuah}.  \\
Cinte \textbf{ABS} \textbf{TOP} this poem 3SG.NOM write  \\
‘Cinte wrote/is writing this poem.’  \\
• Perhaps referentiality is not the only important factor? (Hopper & Thompson 1980; Næss 2007)  \\
\textit{Referentiality and M-Transitivity in Various Falam Chin Verb Subclasses}\\
• FC subclasses with obligatory non-referential arguments  \\
  o Weather/time of day  \\
  o Some motion  \\
  o Internal experience  \\
  o Some attributive  \\
\textit{Weather/Time of Day Verbs}\\
\textit{ruah sur} ‘to rain’\\

(15)  Ruah a \textit{sur}.  \\
rain 3SG.NOM fall  \\
‘It’s raining.’  \\
(16)  *A \textit{sur}.  \\
3sg.nom fall  \\
‘It’s raining.’  \\
(17)  *Ruah \textit{cu a sur}.  \\
rain \textbf{TOP} 3SG.NOM fall  \\
‘It’s raining.’  \\
\textit{English}  \\
It’s raining.  \\
\textit{Falam Chin}  \\
Ruah a \textit{sur}.  \\
\textit{LS: do’} \textit{[rain’]}  \\
\textit{LS: do’} \textit{(ruah, [rain’} \textit{(ruah))]}  \\
\textit{SR: do’} \textit{[rain’]}  \\
\textit{SR: do’} \textit{(3sg[ruah], [rain’} \textit{(3sg[ruah)})]}  \\
\textit{No semantic arguments}  \\
\textit{One semantic argument}  \\
\textit{M-atransitive}  \\
\textit{M-atransitive}  \\
Other examples: \textit{ni sa} ‘to be hot [weather]’; \textit{zanlam khua sim} ‘to be evening’
**Motion Verbs**

*lam leng* 'to walk'

(18) Thangte *in/cu nazi pakhat sung lam a leng.
Thangte ERG/TOP hour one for path 3SG.NOM walk
‘Thangte walked for an hour.’

(19) Thangte cu a Ø leng.
Thangte TOP 3SG.NOM 3.ACC visit
‘He visited Thangte.’

(20) *Thangte cu lam a leng.
Thangte TOP path TOP 3SG.NOM walk
‘Thangte walked.’

(21) *Lam cu Thangte cu a leng.
path TOP Thangte TOP 3SG.NOM walk
‘Thangte walked.’

**English**

John walks. Thangte cu lam a leng.

LS: do' (x, [walk (x), lung])

SR: do' (John, [happy])

Two arguments, one non-referential

M-intransitive

Other examples: *ti leuh* ‘to swim’; *hna tsuan* ‘to work’

**Attributive Verbs**

*cal ngawlh* 'to be bald'

(22) Thangte le Mang *in/cu an lung a/an ngawlh.
Thangte and Mang ERG/TOP 3PL heart 3SG.NOM bald
‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

(23) *Thangte le Mang cu an lung cu a ngawlh.
Thangte and Mang TOP 3PL heart TOP 3SG.NOM bald
‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

(24) *An lung cu Thangte le Mang cu a ngawlh.
3PL heart TOP Thangte and Mang TOP 3SG.NOM bald
‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

**Thoughts on Syntactic Representation**

- Non-referential NPs have a predicative function
  - They are obligatory (Falam Chin)
  - They are in the focus domain
  - Core incorporation

Figure 2: Syntactic structure of weather verbs
References


